28th Congress, 1st Session.

Rep. No. 455.

Ho. of Reps.

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NATIONAL FOUNDRIES.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 350.]

April 27, 1844.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. Brodhead, from the select committee on the subject, made the following

REPORT:

The select committee, to whom were referred sundry memorials, praying for the establishment of national foundries for the fabrication of cannon, &c., for the land and naval service, submit the following report:

To provide for the common defence of the country, is one of the most important and sacred duties of the General Government. It was one of the main objects for which the Union was formed. We know, historically, that the rights of no nation, however just, have been respected merely because they were so. To prevent insult, we must be able to repel it. An ability for war, a capacity for resistance to hostile encroachments, always give national importance, and *command peace* upon honorable and just terms. All experience teaches that no nation, however anxious for peace, can expect to escape occasional collisions with other powers. Hence the parting admonition of the father of his country—"in peace, prepare for war"—should be strictly observed. Had it been obeyed, much blood and treasure would have been saved during the last war; our capital never would have been sacked, and left a heap of smoking ruins. But to enlarge upon topics of this kind is unnecessary.

As brevity in congressional reports has become essential, considering the number to be made and read, the committee will only *state* the facts and arguments which have led them to recommend the establishment of national foundries, without elaborating much thereon.

All the distinguished men who have occupied the presidential chair, have recommended the establishment of extensive fortifications, &c., for the defence of the country. Some of them have specifically recommended the establishment of foundries and military factories to be owned by the Government, and to be under the direction and management of experienced and responsible officers thereof. During the administration of Washington, an act was passed, in pursuance of his recommendation, authorizing the establishment of a national foundry or foundries; but funds could not be obtained to carry out the provisions of the law, and it was repealed. The country at that time was in a state of exhaustion, caused by the Revolution, and burdened by the immense debt thereof.

In 1837, the attention of Congress was again specially called to the subject of national foundries by President Van Buren, and another ef-

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fort made to obtain their establishment. But it failed, as all similar efforts had before, when the recollection of the disasters of war, for which the country was unprepared, was not fresh, and an immediate prospect of war was not apparent.

In 1840, so great was the anxiety on the subject, that a board of ordnance officers were authorized to visit Europe, with a view of acquiring a practical knowledge, from actual observation, of the process of manufacturing and casting iron and brass cannon, the nature of the ores and pig metals used, the description of furnaces, and the kind of fuel used therein, and the mode and regulations for the inspection and proof thereof. This board visited all the principal foundries, &c., in England, and upon the continent, (all of which are under the superintendence and control of Government officers,) and upon their report to the Secretary of War, in March 1841, embodying much useful information, the establishment of national foundries was again recommended.

The fortifications of this Government have cost many millions of dollars. The armament thereof is not yet complete. About 4,000 pieces of cannon are necessary fully to equip them, besides a very large number of balls, field trains, and cannon for the naval service.

It is a fact well known in the history of this country, and properly stated by the Secretary of the Navy in his report to the present Congress, that during the late war more of our seamen were killed or wounded by the explosion of our cannon, than were killed or wounded by those of the enemy. Our gallant sailors feared much more our own cannon than those of the enemy; and the dread and apprehension thus produced, greatly prevented, in some instances, efficient exertion, and led to most disastrous consequences. All the cannon now or heretofore owned by this Government were either taken from our enemies in time of war, or fabricated at establishments owned by private individuals, whom, it is not uncharitable to suppose, were quite as anxious to get large prices therefor, as to make them of the best materials and in the best manner. Those taken from our enemies are of different calibres, have been a long time in use, and never were worth much. The history of the late war, so far as it regards the bursting of our cannon, and the difficulty of ascertaining the strength and soundness of those made by private contractors, by any tests which may be applied after their construction, ought to cause the most anxious inquiry as to the best manner and means (not the cheapest) of fabricating the same. It is believed that all the operations, from the selection and smelting of the ores, to the casting and proving of the guns, should be under the personal supervision and immediate control of scientific and responsible officers. The late explosion of the gun on board the steamship-of-war Princeton, (so lamentable in its consequences,) clearly proves that no tests which can be applied can guard against latent defects. [See report of officers upon the subject.]

The Government being the only purchaser of ordnance, the establishment of national foundries will effectually prevent private individuals owning foundries from dictating their own terms, in times of emergency. It would furnish the means of making suitable experiments, of testing, mixing, and comparing the best kind of metals, establish a standard of quality and proof, and improve the skill of our mechanics.

All civilized nations have adopted some regular mode of supplying themselves with the munitions of war, so as to be provided against

any contingency or emergency adverse to the public interests. The people of this country have always been opposed to standing armies, as contrary to the genius of our institutions, dangerous to public liberty, and tending to onerous taxation. Hence the necessity as well as *economy* of having an ample supply in *store*, of all the means of defence, to be used by the militia and volunteers whenever a proper occasion should occur.

Two national armories for the manufacture of small arms were long since established—one at Harper's Ferry, in Virginia, and one at Springfield, in Massachusetts—and regularly maintained by annual appropriations to the present time. Their manifest utility is now known and admitted by all. The great improvement in the construction of small arms is mainly to be attributed to the experiments allowed, and constant support given by the Government to these establishments. Individual means and divided efforts would have been inadequate to the task. Our small arms are now superior to those of any other nation; our ordnance are not. The same facts and reasons which induced the Government to establish and continue these armories, apply with irresistible force in favor of the establishment of national foundries. The fabrication and testing of cannon is a much more difficult and important task than the manufacture of small arms. The bursting of a rifle is not to be compared in its consequences to the bursting of a cannon. The one may injure a single man; the other may kill or wound hundreds, lessen the courage of our soldiers, tarnish the arms of our country, and render our enemies victorious.

Congress has heretofore appropriated for the ordnance department about $90,000 per annum. It is believed the establishment of national foundries will not greatly augment that sum. Private foundries would not at once be dispensed with, if ever. The Government would be supplied with ordnance, as it now is with small arms, partly by private individuals, and partly by the national establishments. A useful competition would thus be kept up, and we would have a reliable source of supply whenever the public exigencies might require it.

The question of location has been an embarrassing one, so many were the sites recommended. After a careful consideration, however, of the various advantageous locations in different portions of the Union, the committee have agreed to recommend the establishment of two foundries—one in Pennsylvania, in or near the *borough of South Easton*, in the county of Northampton; and one in the State of Georgia, in Cass county, at or near where the Great Western and Atlantic railroad crosses the Etowale river. Each of these locations, it is believed, combines all the advantages requisite for national foundries. Both are sufficiently far from the seaboard to be secure from the sudden incursions of an enemy, yet having cheap river, canal, and railroad communications with our fortifications, naval depots, dock-yards, frontier States, lakes, and Territories; and each affords a ready and cheap supply of water-power, stone-coal, charcoal, iron, clay, sand, provisions, and other materials.

The borough of South Easton is situated near the junction of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers, and near the junction of three canals, to wit: the Delaware division of the Pennsylvania canal, the Morris canal, and the canal of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company. It is on the banks of the latter, which passes through the great iron region of Northampton county, and extends into the great Lehigh coal regions in Carbon and

Luzerne counties. By the Delaware canal, the city of Philadelphia can be reached by an uninterrupted navigation of 78 miles. By the Morris canal, the distance to New York is 101 miles. By means of the Delaware canal, and Delaware and Raritan canal, the route to New York is 126 miles, without the use of the Morris canal; so that the means of transportation to the seaboard and our two great Atlantic cities is complete, from whence articles can be transported to any part of the Union. Independent of this, facilities of transportation to the western lakes and rivers will shortly be completed by means of the Lehigh canal and railroad, and other improvements which are now in progress.

The country in the vicinity of South Easton is very fertile, and the climate remarkably salubrious. On the streams in the neighborhood there are numerous merchant mills, in which 150,000 barrels of flour are annually manufactured from the grain of the surrounding country. Provisions and means of subsistence of every kind are very plenty and cheap. The iron ore in the vicinity is of a very superior quality, and of different kinds, and is now extensively worked in foundries, gun and tool factories, already established in the place. The water-power now in use is equal to any in the Union. The whole of the Lehigh river, which is 100 yards wide, can be, and is now, commanded for the propelling of machinery, with a fall of about 23 feet.

The site in Georgia before mentioned is believed to be best adapted for the location of a foundry in the south. It is on the Etowale river, where the Great Western and Atlantic railroad (which is designed to connect the Atlantic coast with the waters of the west) crosses that river. From that spot access can be had by railroad with the Atlantic at two points, viz. Charleston and Savannah. It is connected with the Tennessee river and waters of the west by the continuation of the Western and Atlantic railroad. The iron ore is believed to be the best which can be found south of the Potomac. The water-power is abundant, at all seasons of the year, to move any quantity of machinery, and bituminous coal and charcoal can be obtained without difficulty. It is in the midst of a healthy, fertile, and grain-growing country, and well adapted in every respect for an extensive foundry. Entertaining these views, the committee report a bill.

A BILL to provide for the establishment of national foundries.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, or such portion of said amount as may be necessary, be paid out of any moneys in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purpose of purchasing two suitable sites for national foundries, and the commencement of suitable buildings thereon, for manufacturing ordnance, projectiles, and other appendages for the land and naval service of the United States: one in or near the borough of South Easton, in the county of Northampton, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and the other in Cass county, in the State of Georgia, at or near where the Great Western and Atlantic railroad crosses the Etowale river.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized and required to make such purchase, and to call to his aid, in selecting and contracting for said sites, such competent officers in the public service as he may deem expedient.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That such of the officers of the United States as the President may require, shall report a plan for said national foundries, together with the cost of all necessary buildings to carry them into useful but moderate operation; and such plans shall be so laid down as to show the capacity of each for being enlarged, whenever the national wants or emergencies may require their enlargement.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That the said foundries shall be placed under the direction of the ordnance department of the army, and that two master founders shall be appointed by the President, with a salary for each not exceeding two thousand dollars per annum.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized to establish regulations prescribing the manner in which said foundries shall be employed, in manufacturing ordnance for the land and sea service, respectively.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That a report of the operations of said foundries, including the amount of the expenditures made, and of the articles manufactured therein, shall be annually laid before Congress.

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